

## **Pull me under** by **goldencone**

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**Summary:**

Nancy was felt as if she was drowning, and all she wanted was to pull Jonathan under with her.

## Pull me under

Nancy didn't sleep.

Well, technically, she did sleep, as she would be dead if she didn't. But Nancy hasn't *rested* in over a year .

It was the type of sleep where you know you're asleep, but you feel as if you're awake, all too aware of your surroundings and the heavy darkness of your room. For Nancy, it wasn't that heavy darkness or eerie silence. It was the looming figure of a demogorgon that wasn't actually there that Nancy was aware of. So when Nancy slept, it was tentative, and she woke up exhausted the next morning, lids heavy with faux sleep. It was normal, everyday, and Nancy had accepted it into her routine.

Today, Nancy quietly awoke, deftly panicked but too scared to move, as the demogorgon moved to her bed and nearer to her. There was no monster when she opened her eyes. All that was there was cold air that bit on all her exposed bits, soft morning light, and birds that signaled it was time for the small town of Hawkins to rise. Nancy laid back and stared, wide awake, at the ceiling until Mike hollered for her to get up.

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For the second time in one day, Nancy was scared out of her slumber. This time, it was by a large hand, connected to the gangly arm of Steve. She lifted her eyes to meet his and rolled them, eliciting a grin from Steve.

“Didn’t get any sleep last night?” Steve inquired, taking his seat next to her. The hallway bell trilled loudly and she squeezed her eyes shut.

“No, Steve.”

“Do you ever?” Steve prods, taking her hand and intertwining her petite digits with his. She stares unyieldingly and sighs , “I don't know Steve, can we talk about something besides my mental health every once in awhile?”

Steve sighs, and kisses the back of her hand, “Sorry babe, i'm just worried...”

“Ms. Anderson is talking,” Nancy deadpans, untangling their fingers and scribbling down the notes presented overhead. Steve just stares, and Nancy doesn’t understand her actions.

They reconcile under the sheets at her house that evening.

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Nancy sits in the back stairwell of the school farthest from the cafeteria, farthest from Steve and Sandy and all the other people who so *desperately* wanted Nancy to be normal again. Here, she can sit peacefully, picking at her cucumber sandwich and potato chips. S he drops a chip and stares at it solemnly. She wiggles her toes inside the sherpa-lined snow boots she got for Christmas.

Suddenly, the sound of trays falling, clashing, and a simple curse rang through the halls. Disregarding her sandwich, Nancy goes to investigate. Turning the corner, she sees Jonathan on his hands and knees, picking up photos and pans and equipment she doesn't even know the name of. Jonathan senses her presence and glances up.

“Do you need help?” She asks, taking a step towards the mess and kneeling down. Jonathan studies her through his long hair. She looks tired. He looks back down, mumbling “I was trying to carry too much to the dark room, if you want to help me...”

She pushes her hair behind her ear and begins collecting the photos, once by one.

“Those aren't my photos, these are some of the other students...” Jonathan pipes up, taking notice in how Nancy tried to nonchalantly study the photos as she stacks them. She nods frantically, and they stand simultaneously and walk in silence to the dark room.

She sets the photos down and clutches her school bag, glancing at all the photos strung on the walls. She wonders which ones are Jonathans. Wonders what photos he's taken with the christmas gift given to him from Nancy and Steve.

Nancy and Steve.

Nancy closes her eyes.

As if he's reading her mind, Jonathan speaks up, "My photos are, uh, over here if you're interested." Her eyes flutter open and she looks where he's pointing, "You don't have to look, but you know, if you want-"

"I'd love to," Nancy interrupts, moving over to the left wall. His photography, so distinctively Jonathan, is displayed in 4 rows. Pictures of the towns mom and pop shops, his cameras reflection in a cup of coffee. Will, Joyce, Mike and Dustin. Power lines heavy with snow. Nancy sighs. The tranquil ambience of the room envelopes her, and she feels herself sway. Jonathan clears his throat after a few minutes.

"I haven't been sleeping," Nancy states. She's not sure when she decided now was a good time to vent to Jonathan, someone who she had such tentative conversations with, but apparently it was now.

Jonathan stares, with that intense gaze. Nancy finds herself staring back. *The lack of sleep is affecting me.*

"Me neither." Nancy sighs heavily with relief, the tension in the room loosening out. She rubs her eyes, "It's just, always there, you know?" Jonathan nods. He knows.

"It always in my hallway, when I try to sleep. I don't feel safe." Nancy mumbles, and rubs idle circles along the palm of her hand, along the scar that expands across her small palm. Jonathan rubs the nape of his neck in the same nervous manner, "I've tried sleeping pills, alcohol, weed..." he says, "Nothing works for me either."

She sighs, and wonders why she doesn't talk to Jonathan more often.

"Lunch is almost over," he shuffles to his bag and packs it, saving his camera for last.

"Thanks for talking to me," She says, catching his gaze. His eyebrows twitch, and he gives a small smile elicits one from Nancy as well. A real smile.

When Nancy catches up with Steve after school, she tells him not to come over that night.

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Nancy makes it a habit to start eating lunch in the dark room with Jonathan. They talk, observe the other students photography, analyzed his own, studied. She made it a habit to bring an extra sandwich for Jonathan every day, seeing as he didn't have time to make his own in the morning. He was appreciative of this, spilling out thank you's and promises of a nice dinner one day, and Nancy just smiled, told him it was no big deal. Over the next couple weeks, they became closer, spending their study hall periods huddled in a back staircase, reading to one another.

They spent every moment they could with each other, and they both loved it.

There was some unspoken partnership between them, and even

though they never spoke of that frightful week last year, there was a silent acknowledgement that they knew they were each others rock. Nancy often thought about when they were *just* teenagers, only concerned with things that kids their age should be. They were a year older now, a year wiser. 16 was a gangly age for Jonathan, but 17 was much kinder, filling him out and adding an inch to his height. Nancy looked the same, but her hair was much longer, her face had filled out slightly. They looked like young adults now. The events that transpired forced them, in a grotesque and unfair manner, to mature inside as well. The responsibilities that came to them hit them like a ton of bricks. Took a toll on their livelihood. Nancy can't help but wonder if this is what her mother means when she says, "you'll understand when you're older" to Holly and Mike.

Nancy lays tenderly across the couch in the back of the dark room, watching as Jonathan processes the photos of his peers. There's music playing, a tape Jonathan had made for when he has the dark room to himself, "It just sounds like noise," Nancy had commented when she first heard it. Jonathan had snickered, "It's punk, and punk is... interpretive." They shared a laugh.

He moves deliberately slow with the pan in his hands, to the clothespin-ridden wire, and prepares to hang the photos up. He looks over his shoulder, and Nancy smiles in his direction.

She's not sure when she fell asleep, but she did, and Jonathan softly shook her awake.

"Hey, Nance, are you asleep?" He whispers. Nancy opens her eyes quickly and huffs, "What happened?"

"You dozed off," He chuckles, helping her collect the things that go in

her bookbag. Their hands brush and Nancy thinks she hears Jonathan's breath falter. She stills, and looks up and him.

“Did... did you actually sleep?” He asks, not making eye contact. She clears her throat and speaks, “I uh... yeah, I actually fell asleep.”

Jonathan wets his lips, and nervously asks, “H-How was it?”

Nancy's heart drops to the pit of her stomach. Jonathan had forgotten what sleep feels like.

She doesn't this twice about capturing his hand in hers, looking up to him for reassurance, and pressed the back of his hand to her cheek, closing her eyes. They stay like that for a few minutes, Jonathan's pupils blown, and his steady breath lingering between them. “It feels like this,” Nancy whispers, looking up at him with her cerulean blue eyes. Jonathan feels himself getting lost in them, never wanting to forget the softness of her hand against his rough, calloused one.

Nancy pulls away from him as if struck by lightning when she feels herself doing the same thing. She shuffles away and stands up quickly, smoothing the front of her brown midi skirt, “I have to meet Steve right now, sorry.” Jonathan nods.

It's always Steve, always will be. She leaves without another word.

#### **Author's Note:**

ohhhh my sweet children love each other and i love them. i love this pairing more than the words in this fic can describe.